

Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys

Langton Lane, Nackington Road, Canterbury, CT4 7AS

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students make excellent progress and attain very high standards. Their achievement is exceptional in science and mathematics. Many students undertake original and innovative research alongside professional scientists and engineers.
- The curriculum goes far beyond the requirements of examinations by delivering greater depth in academic subjects, a rich programme of lectures and courses and numerous additional activities in sports and arts.
- The development of students' intellectual skills and ethical integrity underpins the school's approach to education. Students assimilate valuable attitudes and attributes through the school's philosophy and ethos.
- Students are taught extremely well by enthusiastic, dedicated and, in some cases, inspirational teachers. Excellent, respectful relationships between staff and students contribute to the high quality of learning.
- Students who have particular learning needs receive outstanding support to reach their full potential; parents value the thoughtful consideration given to their welfare.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Practically all students move on to prestigious higher education institutions or universities.
- In all years, students flourish both academically and socially. They mature into well-rounded young adults who are considerate of others and confident to tackle whatever their future lives may bring.
- Students' behaviour and their desire to learn are outstanding. The promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness has a high and successful focus. Students enjoy all aspects of school life and feel safe and well cared for.
- The headteacher and senior managers lead with confidence and successfully focus on the school's philosophy of nurturing an all-round education over seven years. Subject and pastoral leaders are effective and accountable for students' academic performance and personal development.
- The governing body fully supports the school's science specialism and broad curriculum. It combines this with critical analysis of any areas of relative underachievement or concern.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 52 part-lessons, several of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed assemblies, tutor sessions and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work, other staff with positions of responsibility, several members of the governing body and the principal of a neighbouring academy.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents, including the school’s own evaluation, a review of girls’ lives in the sixth form, long- and short-term improvement plans and data about past and present progress, standards, exclusions, attendance, behaviour and the school’s philosophy.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account the school’s own recent parent surveys, 224 parents’ responses to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View questionnaire and questionnaires completed by over 90 members of staff. They took note of five communications from parents.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

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Michael Sutherland-Harper

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Cliff Walker

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It often refers to itself as 'The Langton'.
- The school specialises in science and mathematics and promotes science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education vigorously. It has working links with major organisations such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and has a purpose-built facility for scientific research.
- The sixth form is mixed, with about twice as many boys as girls. It has grown considerably in recent years and now has close to 500 students. It is the largest school sixth form in Kent.
- About one in five students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Eastern European heritage.
- A below average proportion of students speak English as an additional language, of whom less than half are at an early stage of learning English.
- A very low proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for specific groups, including looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families. The school has extremely few looked after children and children of service families. No Year 7 students are eligible for catch-up funding.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well below the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- The school provides for students on the autistic spectrum disorder. They are cared for within a faculty of support and guidance, no longer in a separate unit. They are rarely taught in the faculty but use it as a base to discuss their learning and personal needs.
- The school does not use any alternative off-site education provision.
- The school works collaboratively with Canterbury Academy to support the academy's curriculum and teaching of the most able students and so that it can learn from the academy's teachers' expertise.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To ensure 100% pass rate in all GCSE, AS and A level subjects:
 - make sure teachers analyse standards and progress assessment information and intervene early if a student is making less than outstanding progress
 - within and between departments, regularly share the high quality teaching that exists in the school and its partner academy
 - make learning in Years 7 to 9 more imaginative and enjoyable by letting students be more active and involved in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The school attained 20 Oxbridge places in 2013 and over 40% of students went to Russell group universities; the most able students' performance was outstanding. There is an upward trend in A level results, with over 50% A*/A grades in 2013. A large number of students take mathematics and science subjects and achieve extremely well.
- For the first time in many years, the percentage of students attaining five GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics dropped below 95% in 2013 because the English pass rate declined. A detailed, probing analysis of the English results generated improvements which have been introduced.
- Nevertheless, the percentage of students making high levels of progress between Years 7 to 11 improved in English and in mathematics, which continued its 99% pass rate with over 70% A*/A grades in 2013. Science subjects were also dominated by high percentages of top grades. The most able students attained high GCSE grades. No students take GCSE examinations early.
- Most of the very few students eligible for pupil premium funding achieve as well in all years and at GCSE. Any students who do not make similar progress to others have pastoral issues or particular learning needs. All, especially those who have been diagnosed with autism or asperger's syndrome who achieve very well, are supported by the school as well as possible.
- All other groups of students do equally well in all years, although value-added measures for sixth form girls, who have exceptionally high GCSE results, are not as strong as those for boys – particularly 'external' boys who enter the sixth form from other schools.
- A parent observed that the school is 'not an exam machine but a stimulating, supportive and wonderful place where students are helped to achieve their potential'. This is true, but as a very few students do slip behind, it is good that accurate information is now collected regularly. Middle leaders and teachers know that they are responsible for using it to pinpoint any underachievement and respond swiftly.
- Year 9 students describe the 'opportunities they have to do incredible things'. School research shows that students who participate in additional activities get more university offers than others. Students' outstanding achievements in sports (from table tennis to rugby), music (a vast number of vocal and instrumental ensembles) and the arts contribute significantly to their overall success.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Practically all subject leaders and many teachers generate consistently good, and often outstanding, learning. Teachers have superb subject knowledge; one student observed how many teachers are 'passionate about their subjects and inspiring'. Teachers often set sixth form students research prior to lessons so that discussion can start straight away. Well-planned research projects started in Year 7 culminate in the extended project qualification in the sixth form.
- Characteristics evident in the great majority of successful lessons include:
 - imaginative strategies and fascinating experiments, generating comments such as 'awesome'
 - stimulating resources linking theory to topical issues, real life or one subject to another
 - using model examination answers, providing constructive feedback on students' work and well-structured guidance about how to improve it
 - high level questions, reshaped and extended as necessary, which demand students think hard and express their thoughts clearly
 - knowing students' individual learning needs and their achievement and using this information to shape lessons

- exploring the meaning of words to constantly reinforce and extend students' vocabulary.
- The librarian promotes reading well and all teachers make students aware of the importance of spelling and punctuation. Including those who speak English as an additional language, students' literacy and numeracy skills are of a high standard and support their learning well.
- Learning support assistants usually liaise with teachers in advance of lessons and hence provide helpful, sensitive support for disabled students and those with special educational needs, particularly those with a diagnosis of autism or asperger's syndrome.
- Lecture-style lessons are effective in Years 10 to 13 but boys' enjoyment and progress in Years 7 to 9 is sometimes inhibited when there is a lack of imaginative teaching and active learning.
- Sixth-formers describe marking as being consistently good and say that they know exactly what grades they are aiming for and what they need to do to reach them. Lower down the school, although students value feedback about their work directly from teachers, they do not receive high quality written comments from all of them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- For several years, students have completed a questionnaire rating the teaching they receive in all their classes. Teachers see the summary results. This reflects senior leaders' respect for students' views and their confidence that students combine honesty with sensitivity.
- Students are most attentive in all lessons but younger ones, keen to learn, are not always enthused if they are not afforded enough time to discuss work together or reflect on their own. Nevertheless, the headteacher's determination that the school 'gives students the passion to go on learning and thinking for the rest of their lives' is evident in Year 13 students' ambitions for higher education and their future careers.
- Students behave sensibly outside lessons without supervision. They appreciate being treated as adults. There is no school council as students simply talk to a form tutor or senior manager if they have any issues. Particularly in the sixth form, students are encouraged to be leaders; they enjoy starting up after-school societies. The relatively new Biomedical Society invites stimulating lecturers and was praised by some Year 11 students.
- Assemblies deal with a wide range of topical and thought-provoking subjects, for example the Red Cross, Siegfried Sassoon's war poetry or child soldiers. The latter is skilfully linked to the school's long relationship with a boys' school in Northern Uganda. Students empathise with those less fortunate than themselves and fund-raise generously for a range of charities.
- Citizenship lessons, underpinned by the promotion of attributes such as altruism and integrity, ensure that students know that bullying, racism or discrimination are not tolerated; students say any incidents are extremely rare. Students are alert to the types of bullying their generation faces and discuss cyber bullying or homophobia thoughtfully.
- Equality of opportunity for all is reflected in parents' and students' observation that 'massive numbers' are selected for sports teams so that, whatever their ability, students can experience competitions.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher energetically and successfully promotes the school's long term strategy and philosophy. He, with an inspirational director, oversees the Langton Star Centre, where many students undertake undergraduate-level research. Current topics include plasma physics (set up by a professor from Imperial College), computer science and agricultural science. Links with CERN, STFC and similar organisations support this high-level research. The humanities department is also involved with original research linked to the First World War.
- The head of school leads the day-to-day organisation of the school very well. He is ably supported by other senior leaders, an extended leadership team and middle leaders. Parents praise the 'very approachable and helpful staff' who give excellent support to students on the

autistic spectrum and others with special educational needs.

- Staff morale is high; the quality of their training has improved recently. Nevertheless, teachers do not watch each other teach enough to share outstanding practice and particular skills. Observations of Canterbury Academy staff have the potential to extend The Langton's teachers' styles of teaching in Years 7 to 9. The benefits of these two schools working together are considerable on both sides.
- The school is constantly seeking ways to improve. A good example is the recent commissioning of an evaluation of girls' experience of the sixth form to identify where improvements could be made. The school is equally keen to ensure that 'external' sixth form boys get the most out of their experience. One chose The Langton because: 'There are highly qualified teachers who are more than willing to make the students' dreams come true.'
- Only a handful of students leave at the end of Year 11. They receive much supportive careers advice and guidance. Most move to Canterbury Academy or other sixth forms which offer subjects not taught at The Langton. Sixth formers receive excellent guidance on university courses and preparation for interviews.
- Annually, middle leaders evaluate their department's performance and the headteacher reviews all subjects. Senior leaders' observations on the quality of teaching over time and in lessons are accurate. All these evaluations, linked to students' questionnaires on the quality of teaching, feed into teachers' performance management reviews. Leaders appreciate that teachers' targets for students' progress have not been sharp enough, especially as the introduction of performance-related pay is under way.
- Many teachers use information about students' progress towards targets to plan their lessons and to identify students who need some extra support. The school appreciates that such intervention has not always happened early enough in the past, whether for a student struggling to attain a grade C or one who might not achieve a predicted A* grade.
- The foundations and skills for outstanding learning are laid in Years 7 to 9, where the academic curriculum is fairly straightforward. Technology options are limited and Year 9 students would like more drama lessons.
- The curriculum becomes exciting and far wider from Year 10 as more subjects are offered, such as Latin and business studies, and History of Ideas lectures start. The extensive topics covered include: the Enlightenment, Marxism, medical ethics, arguments about God, the achievement of feminism, or classical antiquity. In addition, numerous, student-run clubs and societies attract distinguished speakers from wide-ranging backgrounds.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this outstanding school and parents rate it very highly – almost all of them would recommend it to others.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has moved into a higher gear since the last inspection. It now asks analytical questions about the information it receives, comparing the school's performance with other similar schools, and probes reports on subjects which have not done as well as the best. Governors understand that even very high standards can disguise the fact that a few students did not reach their full potential; they know how to evaluate students' levels of progress and the quality of teaching.
 - Governors have overseen the revised performance management arrangements but in the past, teachers' pay rises have informally been influenced by their performance. Despite very small numbers of students involved, governors examine pupil premium spending and whether it has made a positive difference. They also check that all vulnerable students are fully supported, as not all of them are eligible for pupil premium funding. Governors oversee that all statutory child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118884
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	429557

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1132
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	488
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Spencer
Headteacher	Matthew Baxter
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
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